

Rep. Matt Gaetz
Opening Statement
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee
Hearing on “Security Clearance Processing Status Report”

Good afternoon. This hearing will come to order.

I am chairing today’s hearing because, sadly, Chairwoman Vicky Hartzler’s father just passed away. Certainly, all of us here are mindful of this sad time for Chairwoman Hartzler and her family.

Chairwoman Hartzler was eager that this hearing took place notwithstanding these very sad circumstances. This is because the Armed Services Committee is deeply interested in the security clearance process.

It is essential that a rigorous, fair, and expedient process exist to identify individuals who should be allowed access to classified government data. Without a sound security clearance system, our nation’s safety is potentially endangered and military readiness harmed.

This is the oversight subcommittee’s fifth event on this topic.

Today, we receive another mandated quarterly briefing on the security clearance process. Among other topics, we will hear about the size of the clearance backlog, trends in this backlog, and management initiatives to address it.

I am also interested in learning about the status of the Department of Defense's assumption of responsibility for background investigations and the transition of the management of that process from the National Backgrounds Investigations Bureau.

I now turn to my colleague, Ranking Member Moulton, for his remarks.

(Ranking Member Moulton Remarks)

Thank you Mr. Moulton. Our briefers are:

Mr. Garry Reid, the Director of Defense Intelligence, in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence;

Mr. Dan Payne, the Director of the Defense Security Service; and

Mr. Charles Phalen, the director of the National Background Investigations Bureau.

Thank you all for being here. Mr. Reid, will you please begin?

(Mr. Reid Remarks)

(Mr. Payne Remarks)

(Mr. Phalen Remarks)

[suggested questions for Rep. Gaetz:]

1. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article highlighted the difficulty that some defense contractors have in obtaining and retaining an adequate number of cleared employees. In order to ensure that workers have clearances by the time they join a classified project, some companies are submitting the names of individuals for background investigations while these individuals are still in college. At least one company also conducts its own initial background checks in order to expedite the official process.

How might industry help to reduce further the clearance time?

2. What is the specific size of the investigative backlog?

- How does that compare to the beginning of 2018?
- How much of the backlog is composed of DOD positions?

3. How is the Department handling any shortcomings associated with databases used to monitor personnel?

4. Are there policies or laws that need to change to support the Continuous Vetting program?

5. How does DOD plan to protect against cybersecurity attacks and data breaches as it takes over investigations?

6. What additional Information Technology, cybersecurity, and infrastructure costs are expected?